



March 4, 2016

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged accounting of recent activities of the Town Administrator on your behalf and related to various projects and initiatives.

Election Workers Prep; On Monday February 22nd poll workers were assembled for a tutorial on the regulations and the process for the March 1 Presidential Election in the Town Hall Auditorium. About thirty five people were in attendance at the seminar which was well coordinated by Clerk Carlene Hamlin.

The Secretary of State had a senior member of the elections division (Harry Pertrucci) to speak to best practices to conduct a fair and effective election. It is wonderful to see so many dedicated citizens take part in the election oversight process. It is what makes this democratic society great.

Update, since I wrote the above the election was held, there were few hiccups considering 5,145 voters cast ballots in South Hadley (includes absentees) or 49% of all voters. Congratulations to all the poll workers and Clerk.

Supervisor Leadership Development Program; UMass Amherst Learning & Development, UMass Boston Collins Center, Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Administrators will be conducting an eight week course for managers and supervisors from across the Commonwealth at the South Hadley Public Library.

The group will meet every Friday and participate in experience sharing discussions and hear about strategies to improve employee performance, create a respectful workplace, with some additional attention to supervising in a unionized environment. The Myers-Briggs test will also be part of the training, so as to allow participants to understand better their own strengths and weaknesses.

Treasurer Baldini, Clerk Hamlin, Director Rogers and Director Rodio will participate in this round of training. Alumni include Superintendent Reidy, ATA Wolowicz, Supervisor Broderick, Supervisor Simard, Accountant Sutton, Commissioner Baiardi and Director Trybus. I can say without reservation those people who have applied what they have learned have performed better and have been more successful at their job since taking this training.

Thank you to ATA Wolowicz for coordinating the effort as part of our on-going professional development. It is my sincere hope this will make a difference long-term in the municipal operation.

FY 17 Budget; The Fiscal Year 2017 budget will be in the packet in the final "draft" form. It is balanced, but it required some unfortunate reductions, including \$100,000 commitment to the Stabilization Fund, a reduction of \$40,000 to the OPEB commitment and some smaller reductions to various line items.

I also moved the RDA commitment outside the General Fund budget in anticipation of the \$350,000 grant expected from the Commonwealth in conjunction with South Hadley's recent designation as a 40R community. I believe this is an appropriate use of the funds.

The Town Accountant and I also reviewed the revenue side of the equation to see where we could conservatively look for adjustments. Beyond "New Growth and 21/2". Following some positive trends with various fees, I felt comfortable adding \$96K (building, health, permits, licenses, etc.) to "available funds"

SHELD Solar Presentation: On February 17 the SHELD Board was kind enough to allow Beth Greenblatt (Beacon Integrated Services) and I present to them some of the challenges we are facing in expanding solar opportunities for the Town of South Hadley. Ms. Greenblatt did an outstanding job covering the changing landscape for solar at the State House.

While presently the SREC II program is exhausted with a waiting list there are signs the program will be expanded. This program allows developers to use solar investment tax credits to offset some the cost to install an array. Our consultant is monitoring this closely and will be ready to present the RFP in the near future.

Capital Planning: I attended the recent Capital Planning meeting to review the requests on file, as they attempt to find the best way to move forward on projects which are ready to go and prioritize projects which are still on file.

There were some new projects related to Mosier School, some of them have been on for a while and some are new to the file. It is apparent the school is in significant need of repairs and updates, no matter how you look at it improvements are needed. There was some discourse about even placing the Town Hall and Senior Center on the "Plan" from at least one member, as he felt he "caught grief" from putting it on last year. I strongly protested (I know you're shocked) and asserted that is what the plan is for, if we do not put it on we are criticized for not putting on the plan and if put it on we are chided also, place it in the "just cannot win category".

Appropriations Committee; The Appropriation's Chair Tom Terry called a meeting on February 18 which I attended and presented a update of the FY 16 budget and discussed the contemplated FY 17 budget. The meeting was successful in getting through the entire town-side of the budget. There were some observations and suggested corrections. There was a healthy discussion centered on the need to continue to reduce staff. There seemed to be agreement that the budget was in a good place for mid-February draft budget.

The Appropriation's Committee was very interested in how the Capital Plan recommendations will be coordinated this year to avoid some of misunderstanding and misconceptions which challenged last year's meeting. The Appropriations Committee has tentatively set their public hearing for April 14 and will be meeting with the School Department in the next several weeks.

Ledges Update: Recreation Director Rogers is moving forward with significant changes to the operational structure, as well as the business model at an impressive pace. He has met made contact with most vendors, contractors and advertising outlets which have been part of the operation in the past. The interviews for Golf Operations Coordinator will be conducted later this week, with a recommendation being put forward hopefully soon (if not immediately) after the interviews. The

interviews will be conducted by the HR Director, Director Rogers and the Golf Commission Chair Bill Foley. There are eight individuals who have met the requirements set forth in the posting who have been invited to interview.

The Food and Beverage Coordinator position has also been posted and interviews will start for that position in two weeks. There is a thorough cleaning of the facility scheduled, some dynamic changes to the food operation (geared towards the golf experience) both menu and appearance, outdated inventory is being returned to the distributors (and Ledges is being credited), a merchandise inventory by a third party is being coordinated, with all of that we still intend to be open for golf the first full week of April and the full restaurant three weeks later. This timeline is subject to change due to weather or other issues beyond our control.

Legislative Breakfast(s); February 26th I attended a MMA Legislative Breakfast in Lee. Presentations were made by MMA staff on a number of important topics local aid outlook, Governors Modernization Bill, changes to public records law, Chapter 90 money. There was an overflow crowd at the Senior Center, dominated by public works personnel. The only thing missing was some legislators, but the staff assured the attendees their message would be delivered to the State House.

Some of the changes being considered in the "Modernization Bill" which may be of significant value to South Hadley include changes to unemployment insurance to eliminate some seasonal part time positions from eligibility, changing property revals from every three years to every five years, eliminating mandatory posting in newspapers for public hearings (being fought by newspapers) and allowing notice to be advertised on town websites and changes to the purchase of tax exempt property are also being considered.

It goes without saying only a few of the numerous adjustments to state law suggested in the bill will either get passed or look similar to what was originally proposed. Yet, it is encouraging that the Governor is listening to local government to try and break down barriers.

On Friday March 4, I have accepted an invitation from Fire District 2 Chief Keefe to attend the Western Mass Fire Chiefs Association Legislative Breakfast at the Log Cabin. I am certain there will be numerous legislators at this affair, it will also be public safety centric. I do think it is valuable to attend and appreciate Chief Keefe extending the invite.

Toth Property; This town owned property has some issues ...to say the least. Fire District 1 conducted an inspection of the property and the existing structures. I was immediately summonsed to the property, as was the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Lt. Houle was at the site upon my arrival and Jim Reidy soon joined us, as well. Lt. Houle and Chief Authier both inspected the property. Their intent was to make the property safe and protect the surrounding properties. The exchange was helpful and professional in all regards.

The condition of the property is certainly nothing to advertise, it had tires and other debris strewn about the entirety. I was told the material had been there since it was acquired by the town. There was an old car, hay still in the manger and the house has been accessed by vandals. DPW Superintendent Reidy's crew began work the next morning (March 1) to restore the access path as required for public safety access by the Fire District and the Police and secure the building from "explorers". They will post the appropriate "No Trespassing" signs as required to avert risk, not that they will be obeyed by all.



There was an old oil tank found partially floating in the new lake created by the beaver dam. It seems the beavers have been the only ones working on the property as of late. The next steps required will be to raze the structures to prevent any unnecessary risk exposure and attempt to clear the the surrounding land of any obvious debris or trash. The oil tank will have to removed, Joel Rees (DEP Emergency Response Coordinator) suggested we contact a license professional to modify the dam to lower the water table. This would allow us to get equipment to the oil tank in an enviromentally safe manner and remove it from the wetlands. He also suggested we may want a licensed and insured professional to actually haul the tank out of the pond. You can see the oil tank to the right of photo #1, it may be mistaken for a submarine which would have been much more fun to remove.

Mr. Rees stated while there is no immediate visible or presumed threat to the stream and surrounding eco-system from the “sank tank”, he warned delaying its removal could create larger problems. I am going to proceed in seeking a qualified firm to give us an estimate on removal of the tank sooner than later.



I would suggest a warrant article for Town Meeting requesting \$300,000 to tear down the four structures and remove the debris from the property. Certainly I would seek some better estimates, but I am confident given the amount of tires, the possibility of asbestos laden building material, unidentified liquids in several containers, the extraction of the oil tank and the removal of the hay and other possible tender to reduce fire threats, could reasonably cost \$250 to \$300K. Remember what is not used from the article would be returned to the General Fund. With so many unpredictable issues, I would not want to underestimate the cost and run into some unexpected challenge.

This property could be considered as a possibility for a solar array, as means to recover some of the costs. There may be some development value, a portion of the property is wetlands, and there are some other parts where it is marshy. It is however 20 plus acres where some portion may be useful for reasonable and appropriate development. The main focus for now is making it safe.

As required the Town has been presented with a condemnation order from the Building Commissioner as is required and an order to correct safety concerns by the Fire District. Both include demolishing the structures on the property. Perhaps this is an appropriate property to be developed through the South Hadley Redevelopment Authority, or at least considered. There are parts of this large parcel which should be deemed ConsCom land. The question is should an article be developed for ATM to have this land considered as surplus and prepared for disposition (sale, auction, granted).

MHC Projects; MHC's Man for all seasons Kevin McCaffrey, Paul Breen Facilities Management Director and Shannon Gurek VP CFO paid a visit to Town Hall recently. There is a great deal of excitement on the South Hadley campus with a major build out of the dining facilities, consideration of solar installation and generally a continued investment in their property. All these activities are a good sign for the community.

We also touched on some of the projects the town is engaged. Reinvestment in the Falls, investment in the River to Range Trail and road/sidewalk improvements. Of course like everyone in town hall, MHC would like to see the Woodlawn Plaza become a viable asset to the entire community. As one of South Hadley's most important partners, it is vital to continue dialog and strengthen our relationship with MHC at all levels.

As always, thank you for all your support and guidance on the hodge podge of issues we face every day. With your knowledge and leadership the challenges are met and in most cases overcome through patience and perseverance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
South Hadley, Town Administrator